

Your battle
by attrition
is working,
sir.

Of course.
Death by a
thousand
cuts.



Another blow and
they'll crumple
like paper.

...Sir?



DAG!



Sturdy paper.
Corrugated cardboard.

Now **two** armies
look ready to
eat me.





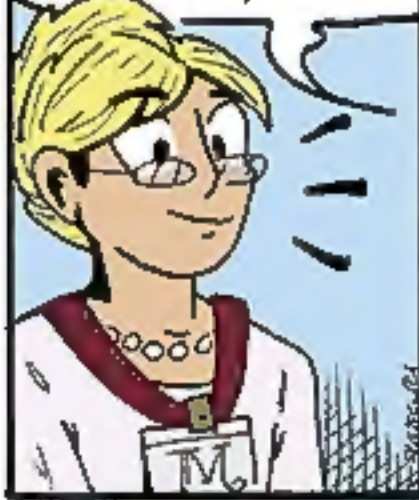
Dr. Sanders, you've ascended to the highest tier of shadow bureaucracy.



Wear with pride the symbol of ultimate power and prestige...



... a Maragda Building roof access pass.



Don't forget the little people.

May my dinosaur say a few words?



This is it, Parini.
The reality blindness
device is on the roof
of this building.



I'll fly up and
deactivate it.
It'll just take
a minute...



Oh, hello,
Tip.



...plus a few
seconds for
a dramatic
showdown
touch-up.



Take
your time.
Wine's
still
breathing.







Don't try
to tell me
my friends
are...are...

Not yet.
In fact,
they've
rallied.



I was worried.
For a while there,
the Biomass was
far stronger.



But now the two
sides are evenly
matched.



This feels
weirdly
like a
seduction.

It's not all
about your
taut body,
Captain.



I hate wasting human troops on the nonhuman problem. Much better if it wipes itself out.



And now, thanks to careful planning, it will. Shall we watch?

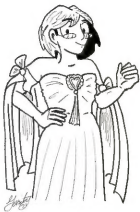


Hey, mamas and papas in the big bad fray!
TIGERLILY JONES is jumping blindly in!



I love her. I'm playing five-dimensional chess against pigeons.





Tigerlily!
What're
you doing
here?

Ending
this
jive.



I aim to smack peace
and love into you all,
starting
with the
honky cat.



Dag, I
could
kiss you.

But I won't,
because I
have a
girlfriend.

I'm cool
with it
if I
can watch.



Babe's
high on
me. She'll
come down.

Somebody
get me some
throwing
stars!



Go away, speck. This is a battle of titans.

What are you, some giant tiger cat man thing?



I am **the** giant tiger cat man thing!



And I'm Tigerlily Jones! Trip on **this!**



I had to
see it for
myself.

It's true.
The Biomass
swallowed
Tiger Lily.



hah...
hah

I know. For
a minute, I
almost
hoped...



HA HA
HA HA
HA HA



Artie
knows
mad
geniuses.

Finally that
cat's bitten off
more than he
can chew!



Endless green in
all directions. It's
like kudzu for
the mind.



In this environment
any sane mind is
absorbed into
the Green.



And an
insane
mind?



Heh.

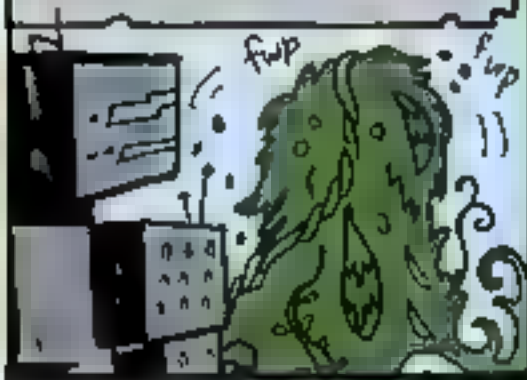


With apologies to T Campbell

HITTY HIT!
WHY GREEN UGLY
NO HIT BACK?



IS AS IF DEEP RIFT
BETWEEN ULTIMATE
FORCES OF CHAOS +
ORDER IS TEARING IT
APART FROM WITHIN!



Quite
astute,
my
petal.

EH. INTERNAL
CONFLICT
JUST ANOTHER
FORM OF
HITTING.



Quickly! Re-form!
We must devour!



Yeah...the Biomass
has decided to be
more selective with
its components.



Starting
with you.
You're out.



If you're
feeling lonely,
I could use
a new rug.

I
need an
antacid.





What're
we gonna
do with
H.T.?

Who's "we"?
You're looking
at my
prisoner.



My current plan is
to display him in
my happening
conversation pit.



He's a war criminal!
He needs to be tried
before some kind of
tribunal!



I'd **much**
prefer the
tribunal.

The trial can
be in the
conversation
pit.



This wasn't just H.T.'s fault. The whole Biomass got...carried away.

May I help?



If you're done with war, I'd like to try to teach peace.



The Cypress would like to join you and help you rehabilitate.

You'd do that?



And bake cookies. We're in!



We won! See that?
The battle of Kansas
is over!

Mm.



And
you
lost.

So far, I've
barely been
involved.



I hoped the nonhuman
factions would fully
eliminate each other.
Oh well. Now we
advance.



Where's my
phone in
these stylish
pockets?

It's funny
how you keep
hoping you're
not too late.





If A-Sig
has cameras
here, they
have **drones**.

Okay, yes,
I should've
thought
of that.



It wasn't my
insight. We're all
mentally linked via
the Unity virus.



We're the ultimate
think tank until we
reject the virus and
start barfing black
goop.



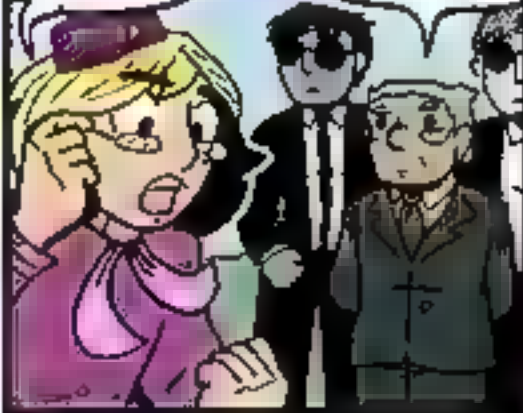
I'm missing
out on all
the fun.

Oh, and
we want
3,000
lightsabers.



Find out
what forces
A-Sig has
waiti—

That'll do.
Guards,
terminate
the call.



I should've
killed you!



Changing
nothing. This
isn't personal.

Oof—
he's
strong—

Well?
Stomp on
his hat until
he cries!



Trainee minions.
Shame I had to send
Echo to his death.





What was the point of this?
Just to gloat?

Not at all, Captain.

I'm fond of you. Believe it or not, I'm more Ira than Mr. Green.

When all this is over, I hope you and I can work together.

And if not, I go in the Loyalty Dungeon?

Please. The Loyalty Pit.

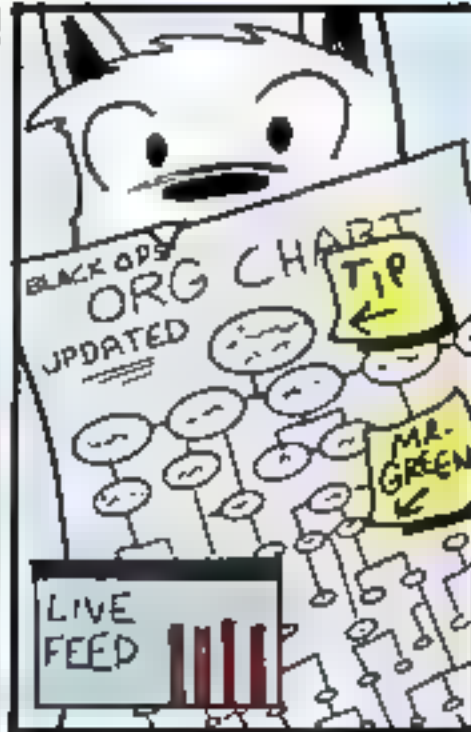
We'll talk
more
later,
Captain—

Sir,
you need
to see
this.



This had
better not
be the dog
again.

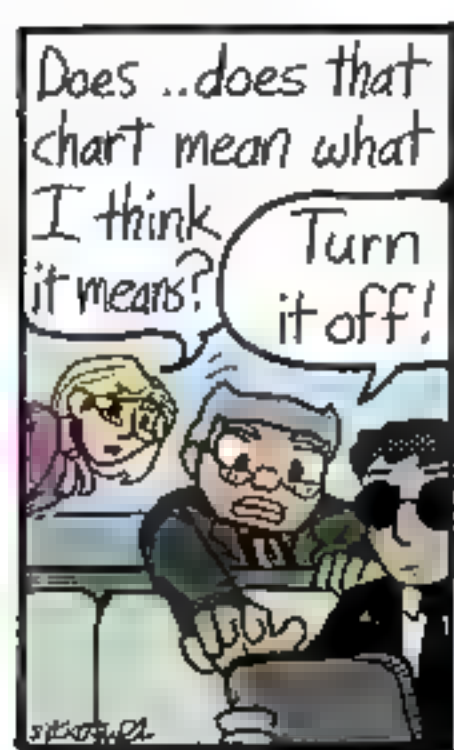
It's more
what the
dog is
holding.



How does
she have time
to make
charts?

That said,
it **is**
a cute
dog.





Cute, but still too late. I've already ordered the attack.

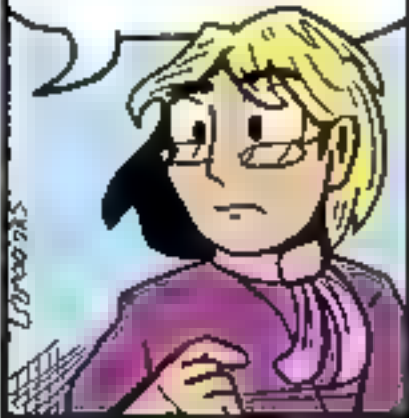
So I'll cancel it.



You can't. Once the order is given, no one can.



Do you want to torture me, knowing your friends will still be doomed?



Honestly, yeah, kind of.

Want some pretzels, sir?



We found the camera. Any other A-Sig tech in our airspace?

Robot traps are futzing with my sensors, but...uh-oh.



What's the biggest drone A-Sig's got, Gin?

Probably a refurbished Predator.



Two Hellfire missiles and a quarter-ton payload. If they're sending one our way—



Welp, they ain't sending **one**.

Put the caterer on hold.



I gotta
get
airborne.

Can't you
keep your
human body
here?



I can concentrate
better in one place.

Then I'm going
with you.



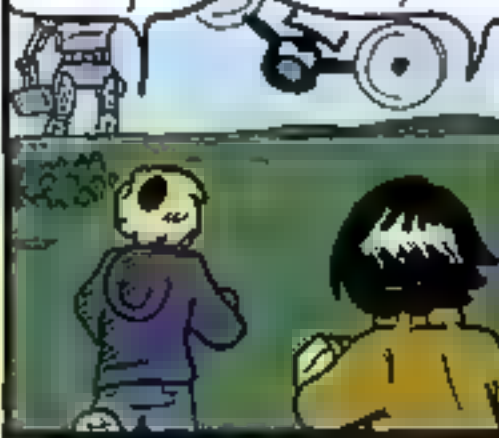
No!
Why?

If I'm on
board, you
won't try to
sacrifice
yourself.



Why you
gotta be a
supergenius,
baby?

Ha ha!
No fiery
death
for you!





You'll go quietly?

I know how to play the game.



THWOK

Urgh!



KRAK

Ow!



Clearly you don't!

Bony old man knuckles!



He's going
for the
flying
platform!

The new boss's
dinosaur
will stop
him!



I like the
new boss.
Not sure
about the
dinosaur.

Dinosaur's
not a team
player.



I won't let you get away!

Have you lost your mind?



Your goons shot up the controls!

Your goons!

I was in charge for two minutes!



make it stop!

Get.

I don't know how it works!



I say we take the dinosaur and claim we saw nothing.

I like it.



Help me
stop this
thing from
rising!

Look at it
down there.
It's so
beautiful.



ENG/TA-022

For the life of me,
I can't understand
why your ilk wanted
to ruin it.



You've got the secret
army and brainwashing
and sapiocide! How'd **we**
ruin it?

By being
weird.



There's too
much to
analyze
before we
both die.

You're
the least
weird.
Think of
that.

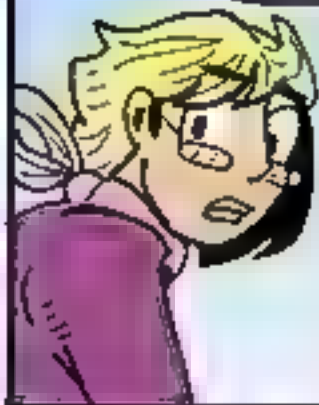


I love this country, Captain. I don't want it destroyed.

You don't want it to **change**.



Y'know, maybe we **could** get along ...if we could be honest.



02/02/22

If you could stop plotting and counter-plotting for one moment and just **listen**...



Eh? Sorry, can't hear you over my rescue helicopter.

Dammit, Ira!



Got you,
sir!
Climb on
over!

Stop, Dr.
Engelbright!
I'm your
boss now!



Oh? Then
I quit.

Then you
have to
return the
helicopter!



Then I'm
stealing it!

I have
a gun!



Bigger
gun!

She's bested
me at
diplomacy!



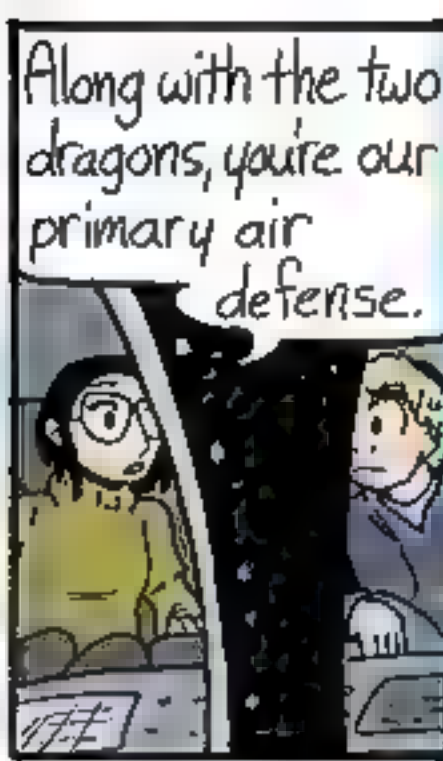


Fine! Flee the scene!
I've got my **own**
rescue helicopter!

Hello, Nick? Can
you pop over to
Fairfax airspace
and pick me up?

I don't know what that
means, but Ira's air
support had
much better
manners.

Manners
can bark
my shins.





I wanted to further test your abilities, but we're out of time.

Ya think?



Nick, I know you see yourself as a machine. But maybe you're not.

Gin—



Maybe you're **machines**.



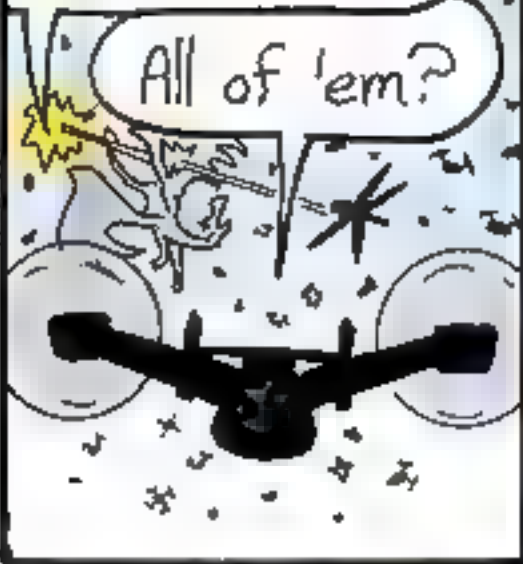
Hopefully a **lot** of machines, because that's quite a swarm out there.

Depends on the wifi sitch.



You can control
the drones, Nick.

All of 'em?



You have to. Lives
are at stake—
including ours.



What... what
if I can't?



We could
have sex
and see if
that knocks
them out.

Really not
ready to
rise to the
occasion
right now.





Baron

Mistycorn

Virginia Lee

Sweetheart

Tip Wilkin

U.N.I.T.Y.

Nick Zerhacker

Savotte

Moustachio

Tigerlily Jones



I... I'm fzztzing
trouble finding my
way back. fzzt
zzt



Okay, can you feel
me holding your
hand? fzzt

lot
going on out
here zzt



Relax... follow
my voice and
my touch...



Would it
help if I
went lower?



Your
filthy
mind,
Gin.

So all these drones
are unmanned.

That's the idea.



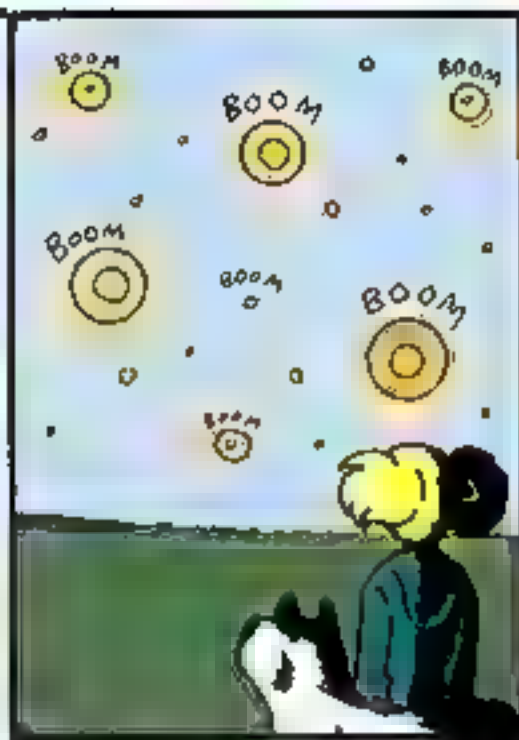
And they're non-
sapient. I mean,
I can feel that.

Indeed.



So, um, it
wouldn't be
abusing
my powers
if...

Yes, you
should
definitely
make them
go boom.



♪♪♪

Hello?

Hey Ira. Just calling to say I blew up your whole drone fleet with my brain.



Now I'm marry the lady you got a wrinkly old boner for, who by the way says you smell like socks.



Who **is** this?

Oh yeah, you thought you killed me. Guess you foxed **that** up too.



Nick
Zerhaker?
Is that
you?!

Haha! This is
what happens
when you find
a stranger in
the Alps!



How did
you get
this
number?

Don't need
numbers
now. I
just **go**.



Only thing I need
is permission to
send you photos of
me banging Virginia
Lee.



You can show
him our trip
to the Poconos,
and that's
it.

He's
freaking
out enough
as it is.



Think, Tip, think.
There's got to be
a way out.

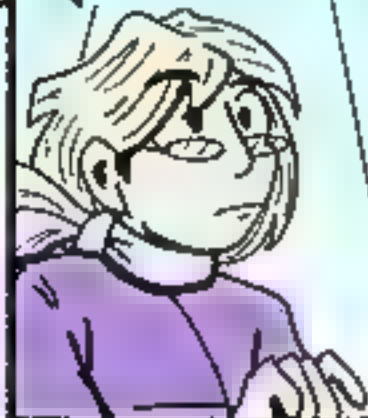


© 2004 2

Up to now, you've
always been able
to pull a miracle
out of your purse...



FWASH

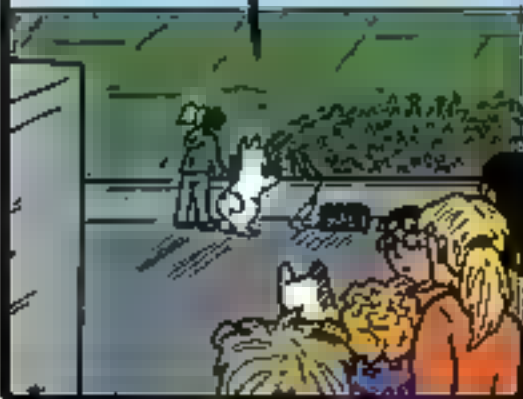


Big purse,
but okay.





Okay! So! Um...
I think we
just won.



Not only did we
defeat Anasigma
and the Biomass,
the reality blindness
has been lifted!



Humans will
acknowledge us.
The world will see
us and everything
we do—



Argh! I
let all my
warranties
expire!

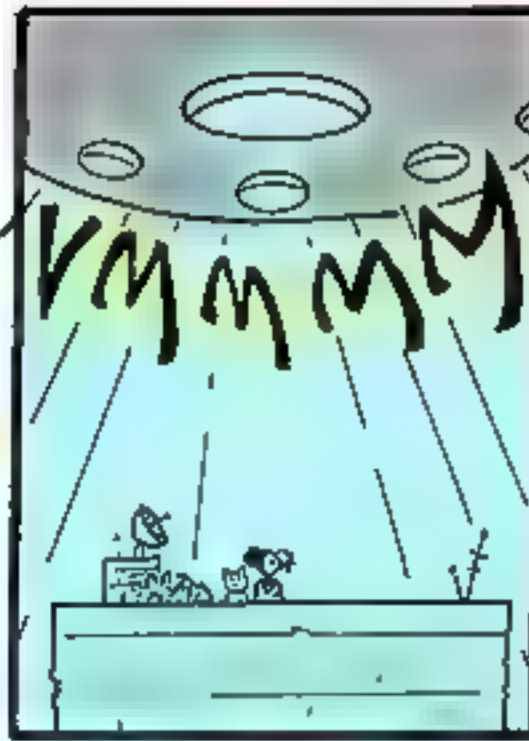
Do
crimes!
Get
credit!



This day belongs to us. Now begins the work of moving forward.



We can build a new world with nothing more hanging over our heads!



Oh crud, the flying saucer thing.

This day is truly like living in a rock opera.





Tip!
What
the
hey?

I got a lift
from a flying
saucer.

What's it
like in
there?

Oh...
mixed.

WHERE IS THE
BEING YOU KNOW
AS "GAVOTTE"?

On the plus
side, there's
an on-site
dry cleaner.

SORRY, HAD
THE GAIN
TURNED
UP.



I am Pavane of **D2**
Lovetron. Thank you for
preparing this landing
site.



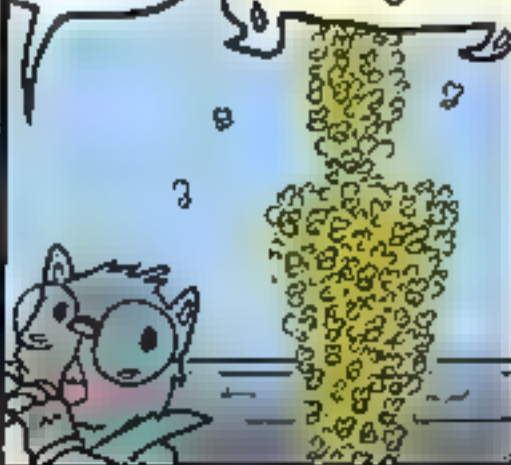
I come here with
two goals. To offer
you passage to a
world of peace and
dignity...



...and to rub my
mom's collective **face**
in how wrong she
was.



Peace and
dignity,
ma'am.



Strike
that!
One goal!



I'm
totus

Hi
cousin
Dr. Lee

P.
as
pandas

I wanted
~~to go~~
to go to land on now.



I can hold
them, Dr. Lee.
I can hold
them.



That.

I like
the term
~~to go~~
to go to land on now.



to go to land on now.

- Right

Dr. Lee

~~to go~~ to go to land on now.

Can you
hold my
hand?

Dr. Lee?

Next?



Don't say you're
a leaf on the
wind don't say
you're a bird
on the wing
don't say.



I have so totally
corrupted your
FOCUS!



What
you're
saying

P.
suppose
pandas



It was incredible.
He just reached out
and he was

Wow.

~~to go~~ to go to land on now.

to go to land on now.



You
of the
world

This is
how the
world is.



Christ,
Mama

Cast your child
of love, Nick!
For happiness



I'm here, Mother. What do you have to say for yourself?

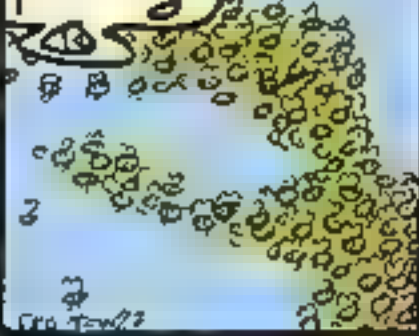


I'm not sure I care for your new look.



Ugh! You're as exasperating as ever!

I have to save these beings. Enjoy your stupid backwards mud planet.



Just like I preferred talking about what a good dog I am.



Dear Moustachio, my daughter and I need to speak in private.

Of course, Madam.

Shall I prepare Refreshment?

Thank you Tea, as ever.

Coffee. Black. I... have never made anything but tea.

NO WORRIES. HITTY BREWS A MEAN POT.

Oh good.

THEN HITS IT.

You're prepared
to fly all these
people to our
homeworld?

It's
the
only
way.

Humans will never
grow up, Mother.
Other sapients will
always be their
toys.

Some
of them
can
learn—

They certainly
learned a
variety of ways
to bomb
your charges.

Creative
potential!

I'm
done
here.

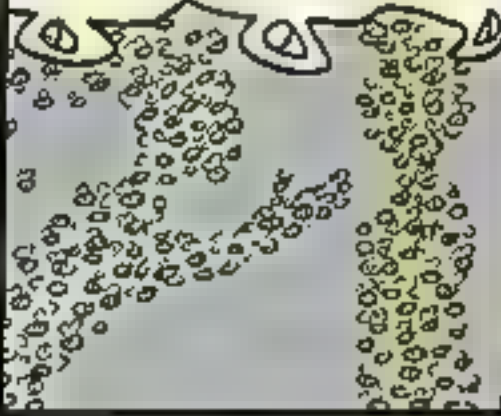
I hoped we could be one again.

You'll always be part of me, Pavane. But we still disagree.



You failed!

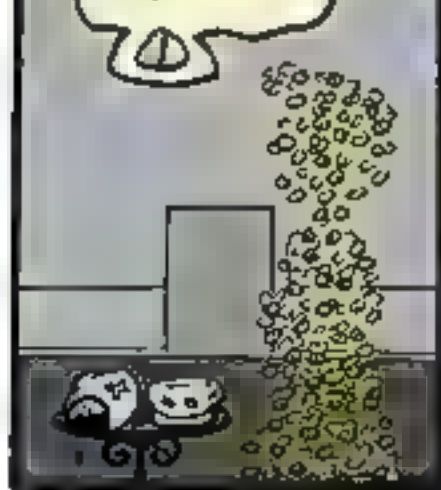
Nonetheless, these people **Humans** should fight for their home.



This grubby planet isn't worth dying for! Why can't you **see** that?!



Well, I like the tea.





Are you okay,
Tigerlily?
You sound...
sane-ish.

Call me
Princess
Berenice.



When I finally
saw the Mothership,
the scales fell
from my eyes.



My mind untangled.
I know who I am
and where I
belong.



I'd feel a Princess
lot better if
I heard a "cut
me some slack,
Jack."



TINSEL RAIN



MOE LANE

Tigerlily,
what's
going on?

You're speaking
to a lost
princess of
Lovetron.



The funk-depleted
atmosphere of Earth
affected her sanity,
but she's already
recovering.



But...
but...

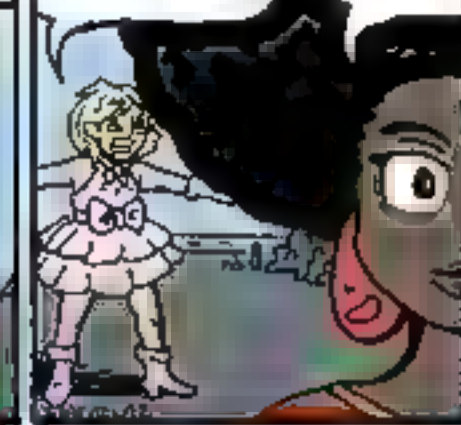
If you'd care
to board...



Thank you.

What
about
taking over
the world?!

Turns out
I already
have
one.



Phone's charged.
Let's board!

Nera...there's no timeline where we get in there.

We don't get to ride the UFO?

Sorry. Lovetron isn't for your kind.

Why not? We fought alongside you guys!

To be fair, we didn't do that much.

And we could continue doing not much in a **flying saucer!**

I mean she's not wrong.



You rolled
out the red
carpet for
Tigerlily Jones!

She is
Lovetronian
by
birth.



She
isn't
bees!

Lovetron has
two sapient
species. Bees,
who guide and
counsel.



And statuesque,
bisexual
humanoids who
do Afrofuturist
stuff.

I'm a
statuesque,
bisexual
humanoid!



Again,
not
wrong

Get me a
lady to
make out
with!



We're cryptid hunters! What will we do without cryptids?

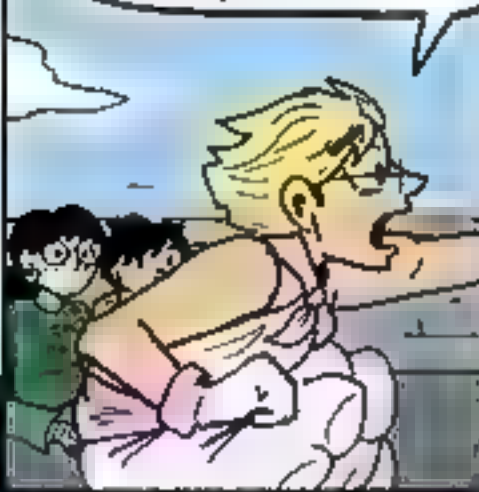
I could pivot to board game reviews.



Our mission is to chronicle the secret weirdness of America, and now the weirdness is going away!



Tigerlily! Come back! I became the Man for youuuu!



Most of it.

Maybe he'll play Monopoly variants with us.



Shove aside, Baron! Is **everyone** leaving? Al society coming thru.



Whaddya want, hugs and tears? Humanity just tried to wipe us out.



Now you wanna get sentimental? Sorry, bud, I'm a robot.

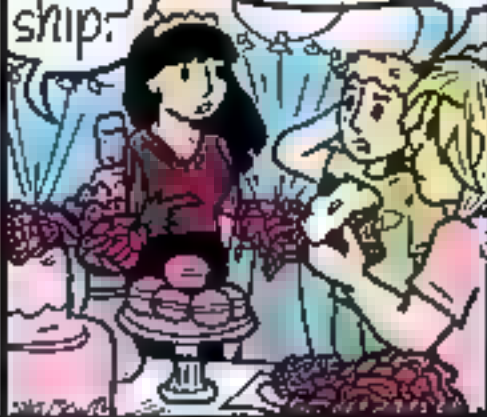


DON'T LEAVE MEE We said we wouldn't do this at the wedding shower.



Will Pavane let you on the ship?

Don't matter. If Gin can't go, I ain't interested.



Anyway, don't you think it's kinda hinky?



Don't matter. I gotta go with my people.



You two going your separate ways, both for noble reasons... so moving.



But you still have to do Wedding Movie Dictionary!



Not without another bottle of rosé, we don't.



any one
to
ing
it

Oh I was
not working
on that
at the time

Surely you didn't
take it or taken it
this certainly did to do it



Not that point
enjoyed this
more of
it



Not any
on you
ing

It was really
in a place to hang
it



There is
nothing there
charming or
real



Gotcha away
from the rest of
the



Was it worth
sitting and
waiting for it



You know
that it was
and was
after

That's what it
was story
if I was
there



Geet? you
and a dead head
in Dr Lee's designs
leave it with
Dr Lee's book
it's thick



So you're
saying my
eyes had no
effect



.....

You're this
body is a
man's struggle



See, I told
you and you
you



Please don't be
so
it's



Dr Lee
in the
ADD for
it



Dr Lee said and
are good
are



asshole and
it's seem a
real plot of
work

Oh, I hope my
eyes will do it
it's



Don't forget
N.C. I'm like
told you
said you
to once



Yeah, that's
the one thing
I never got. Why'd
you do that



Every day
you're
you



Don't
it's



And don't compare me
to



My feelings
are pure



And don't
pander to
open do it
disturb



Nothing to
do



You gotta protect your AI world, but I'mo miss you, y'know?

Aw, I'm basically you.



5/6/2022

Nah. You've grown into your own person, and, um, that's really cool.



That much we got in common, though.



Sorry, you're still talking?



Sorry we
won't make
the actual
wedding.

Yeah...
I guess
this is good-



WHOMP

Oof!

Group
hug!



TWOMP

Ow!

Ow!



I'll settle for
a handshake.

Stay
gold!



Artie, are you leaving
or...you're staying.

Of course.



I don't
want to
hold you
back.

You could
never. What
does "Lovetron"
claim to offer?



A harmonious,
functioning society
where crises aren't
constantly erupting?



You'd
never
survive.

My ukers and
I would miss
one another
so much.



Artie's right. We have responsibilities here on Earth.



We can't traipse off to another planet just as humans can see us again!



We have to rebuild... as a much smaller population...



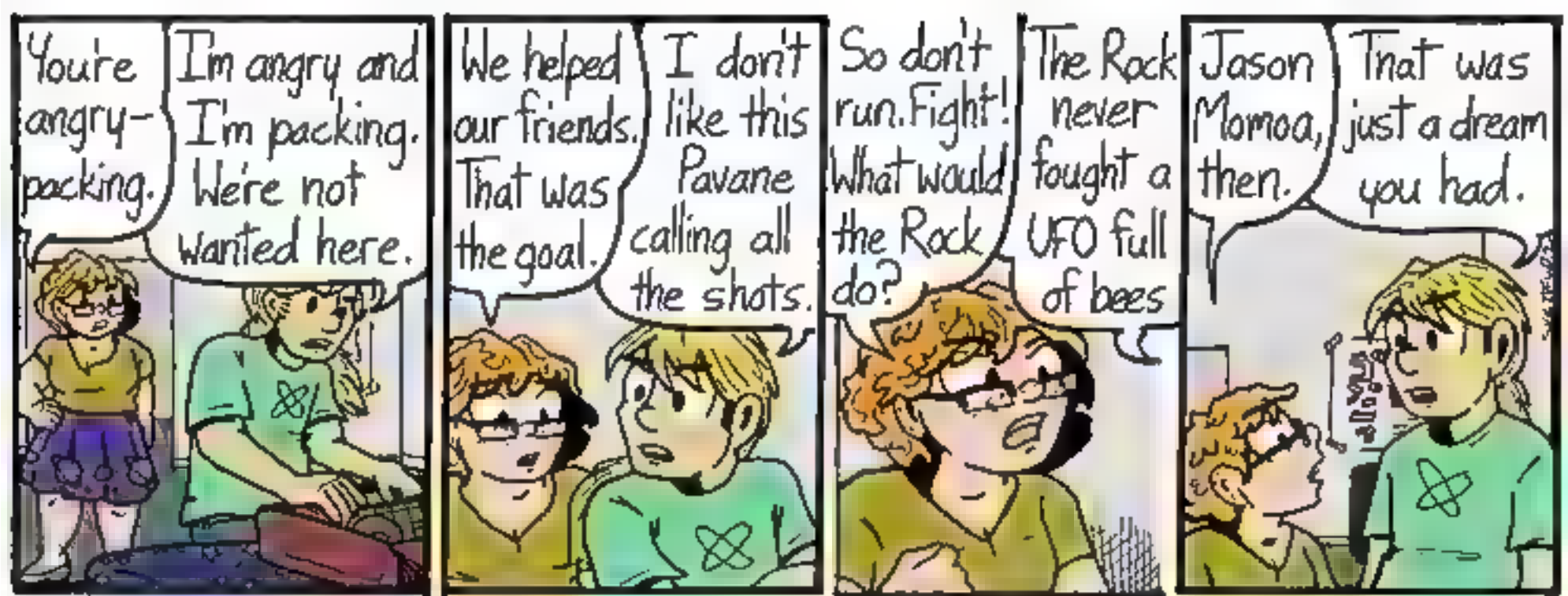
VYOOOM!
Space: the final space!
pew pew!

Silence, temptress!

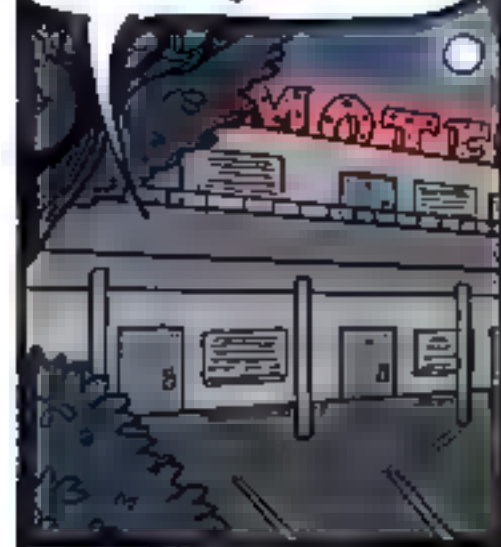


FLASH!

Aaaaah!
Savior of the universe...



I'm just saying,
something stinks.



Pavane shows up late,
kicks us to the curb,
and sells the
nonhumans a
bill of goods.



That's
their
choice.



It still
stinks. Hey, something
does stink.
Is there an
oven on or—



THUD



Book shared by Elizabeth B. Cavilly & Jeffrey C. White

ISBN: 9780393328667



Have you
seen Chris
and
Marcie?

They said
they were
leaving.



Argh! I can't
keep track of
everyone! There
are no plans!



If you're going to
Lovetron, get in line!
If you're going home,
get in the mailing tubes!



Okay, but they're
stupid plans.



If the nerd crew
disbanded, who's
watching my
prisoner?

You
have a
prisoner?

One of A-Sig's
violent, remorseless
goons. If he's at
large...

Good news! My boon
companions and I shall
stay on Earth, seeking
adventure by Greyhound
bus!

Chaos!

Does "boon"
mean anything
dirty?

I don't know
what to expect
out there.



Everyone will be aware
of the freaks and their
enablers
again.

And now
we're...them.



Perfect! I live for
that spice of danger
and mystery!



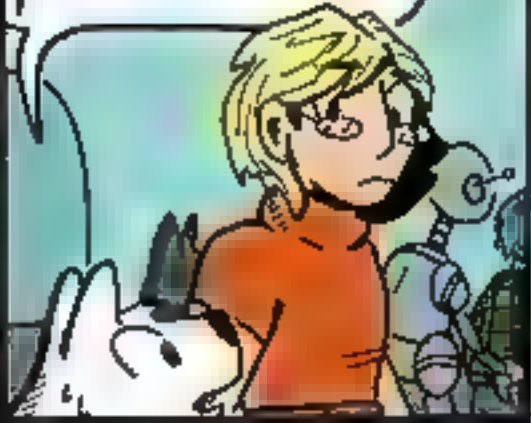
Yeah,
because
you're a
freak.

With freelance
tech skills.
We'll survive.





I have responsibilities here, especially if you hand your shadow-gov position to me.



But Unity wants to leave, and I have responsibilities to **her**.



What do **you** want?

Everything. Nothing. I don't know.



Life was simpler when I just wanted headpats.

My Maslow's hierarchy used to be all shoes.



However things shake out, we have to say a lot of goodbyes.



Goodbye,
Sweetheart!
Goodbye,
Tip!

Langi!
Una!
Good luck!



Crud, I'm
glad you
remember
their
names.



You forgot the
LGBT zombie
headless/head
couple?

Sorry, I just
meet so many.

Yes, point.





Time to say farewell
to everyone who's
meant so much to
us over the years...



ZWEEP

Cheerio,
gov!



Nigel the
Anti-
Gravity
Ferret!

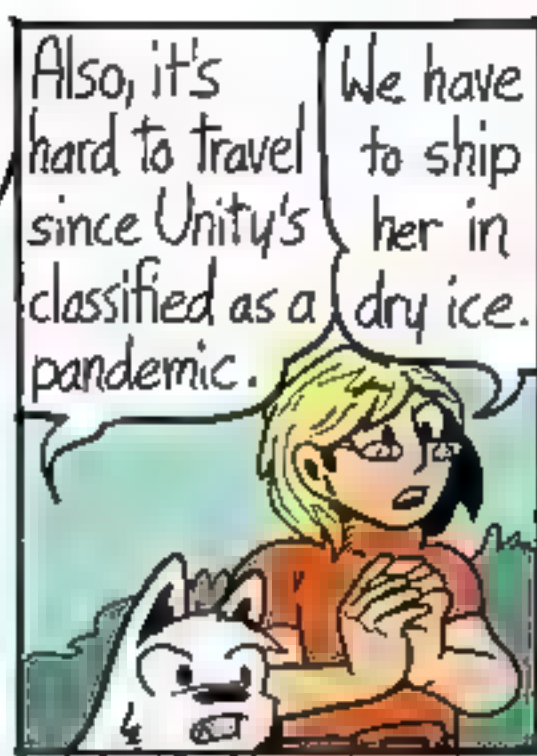
Had to be
'ere for the
end, wot?!



Nigel the
Anti-
Gravity
Ferret?

He's key
to the
expanded
universe!





Sorry things are so hectic.



No worries! My mission here is done.



What mission?



Behold! I can *quadrille* again!



You convinced the Crown to give his legs back!



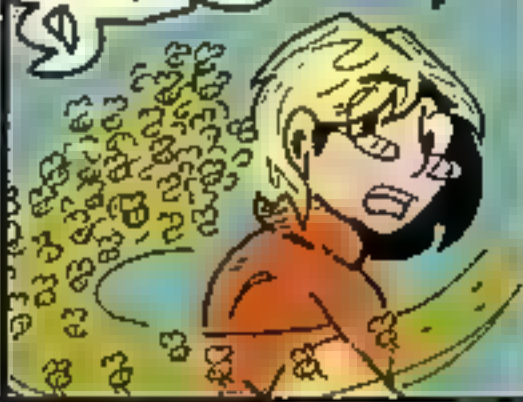
Convinced, robbed, six of one.





Ah, Dr. Wilkin. I've been looking for you.

Pavane!
Yes!
What?



Loading is almost complete, and in light of all you've done...

Yes? Yes?



Could you push the tiger cage into the tractor beam for me?



And...**then** I can get on board?



No, but I'll try to wave.

You can't let H.T. on board! He's a criminal!

He'll be treated as such under our laws.



But **all** nonhuman sapients are welcome.

Respectfully, this is a bad idea.



He was warped by human society. Why keep focusing on its mores?



Respectfully, human society has tacos.

Sweet child, we have **space** tacos.



1. Monster dodie
2. Strange Ones Supergrass
3. Dr. Frankenstein Creepy Nuts
4. See That Animal Elastica
5. Fairy Tales Stockholm Monsters
6. Dominos The Big Pink
7. Call Me a Dog Temple of the Dog
8. Zombified Southern Culture on the Skids
9. Flying High (In the Friendly Skies) Marvin Gaye
10. Headwires The Foo Fighters
11. Fox on the Run Brian Connolly
12. Honeybee Connie Converse
13. Crazy Dreams Jolie Holland
14. Bigfoot! The Weakerthans
15. The End of the World The Cure

Move your ashes! We
got hostiles moving
in!

What?



A-Sig transmissions.
Troops this time.

Nick only neutralized
the drone fleet.



Everybody who's
beaming up, get
beaming! Everybody
else...



...the
usual,
I
guess.

Ugh, I can
only eat
so many
tanks.



Gin? Let's get hitched now. Before half our friends go.

You want to?



Yeah! Where's our officiant?



Turned out to be a Biomass plant. He's escaping into space.



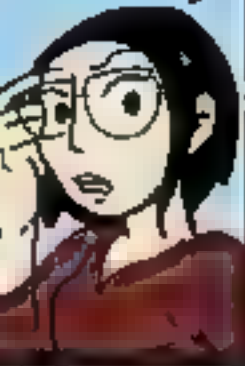
So long, suckers!



Crap, I gotta catch up on group chat.



We'll **never** get our deposits back.



Excuse me!
Can anyone
here perform
a wedding?

We ain't
picky! We can
do a formal
thing later!

A magistrate?
A justice of
the peace?

...A
notary
public?



Dr. Lee, you're my evil creator. I tried to kill you but I guess I can marry you instead.



Biscuit, you can fly. That's rad.



Anyway, I already did the paperwork, so you can make out and stuff.



Thank you. That was perfect.

That's a book about goblin sex.



So, um, we didn't get time to write vows or nothing, so I gotta wing it.



At first I fell for you cuz you were so beautiful. Then I fell for you cuz you were so smart.



Then I fell for you cuz you were **you**. It's you forever.



I wanted to jump your bones.



Wasn't that awesome?
They totally wanted to
do a thing and I
helped them do it!



That's serious love,
right, babe?
Babe?

Unity?



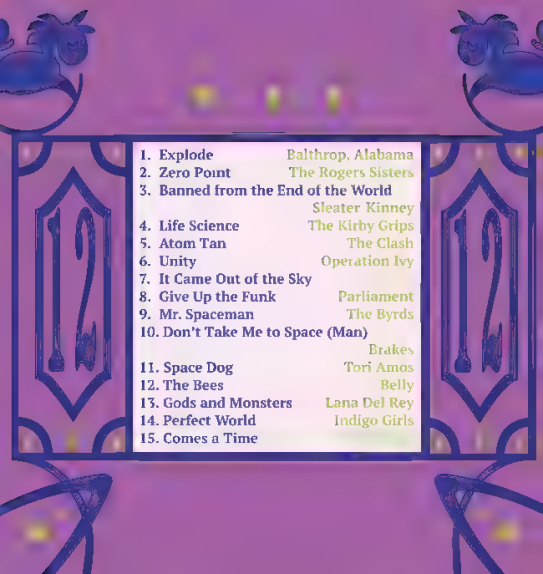
I'm
ready
to
board.

A-okay,
babe!



VWSSSH



- 
- 
- 
1. Explode Balthrop, Alabama
 2. Zero Point The Rogers Sisters
 3. Banned from the End of the World Sleater Kinney
 4. Life Science The Kirby Grips
 5. Atom Tan The Clash
 6. Unity Operation Ivy
 7. It Came Out of the Sky
 8. Give Up the Funk Parliament
 9. Mr. Spaceman The Byrds
 10. Don't Take Me to Space (Man) Brakes
 11. Space Dog Tori Amos
 12. The Bees Belly
 13. Gods and Monsters Lana Del Rey
 14. Perfect World Indigo Girls
 15. Comes a Time

So, uh,
busy day,
huh?

Oh.
Leo.
Hello.

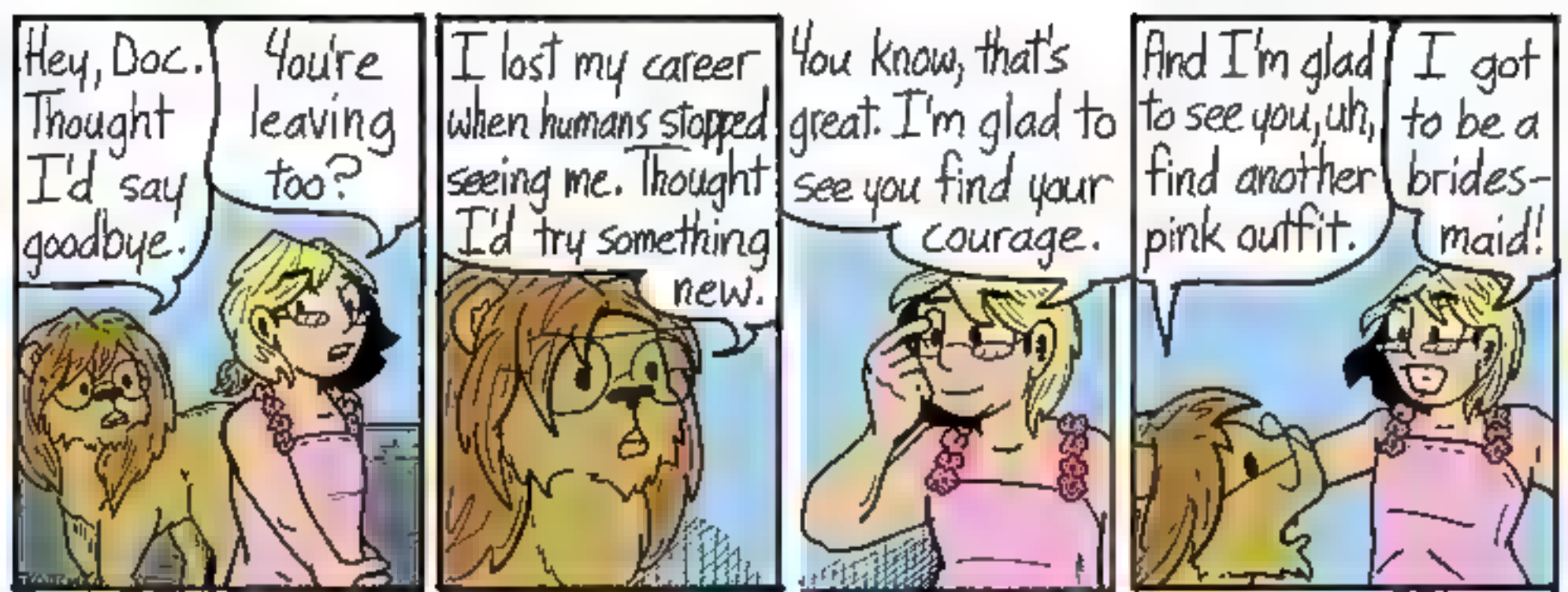
Looking
forward
to a new
start?

I admit I
have certain
regrets
about life
on Earth.

Don't worry! We can
put all that behind
us and get back to
our webcomic!

Doing a
webcomic
is the
part I
regret.

This time
the lions
can have
a Twitch
stream!



Hey, Doc.
Thought
I'd say
goodbye.

You're
leaving
too?

I lost my career
when humans stopped
seeing me. Thought
I'd try something
new.

You know, that's
great. I'm glad to
see you find your
courage.

And I'm glad
to see you, uh,
find another
pink outfit.

I got
to be a
brides-
maid!

Thirty seconds
to departure!

Looks like this
is it, Doc.

There's still 30
seconds for an
unexpected
event. Like...?

Tigerlily!
I'm coming!

Oof!

You call that
unexpected?

My head...

It's 10:09 PM.

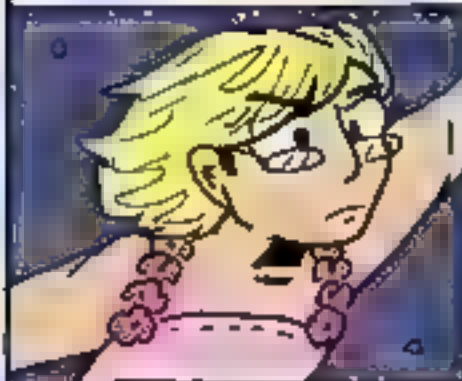
Somewhere
over rural
Kansas.

I'm clinging to a
UFO from the
planet Lovetron.



I just missed
the tractor beam.

The situation is
under control.



I'm a
psychologist.

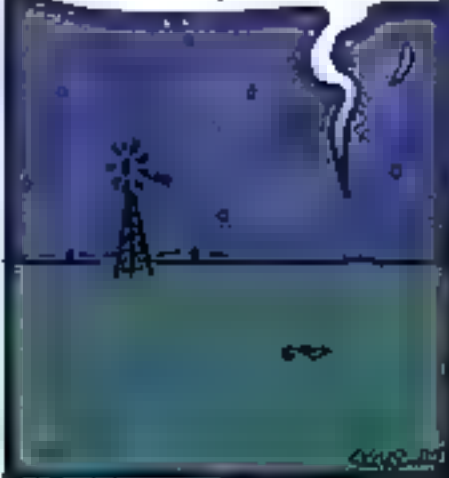
And I **always**
wear nice
underwear.



Stay calm—
stay positive—
hope for the
best—



Some days, "not
entirely dead"
is my best.



A-Sig militia cell 14
checking in. We are
en route to the
conflict site.



Troops are ready
to deploy at the
first sign of—
hold on.



You
okay,
ma'am?

Give it
up.

You got
what you
wanted.



They're
gone.



1. Deep, you're
for getting me
and the right to
down

1. In about
the 1980s
the 1980s

I know
I'm sorry

1. I'm sorry
to the other side
of the
line

1. Don't ever let
leg 3, keep for more
news, but this is the
end of the world
for you

1. I'm sorry
to the other side
of the
line

1. I'm sorry
to the other side
of the
line

1. I'm sorry
to the other side
of the
line

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to the other side
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1. I'm sorry
to the other side
of the
line

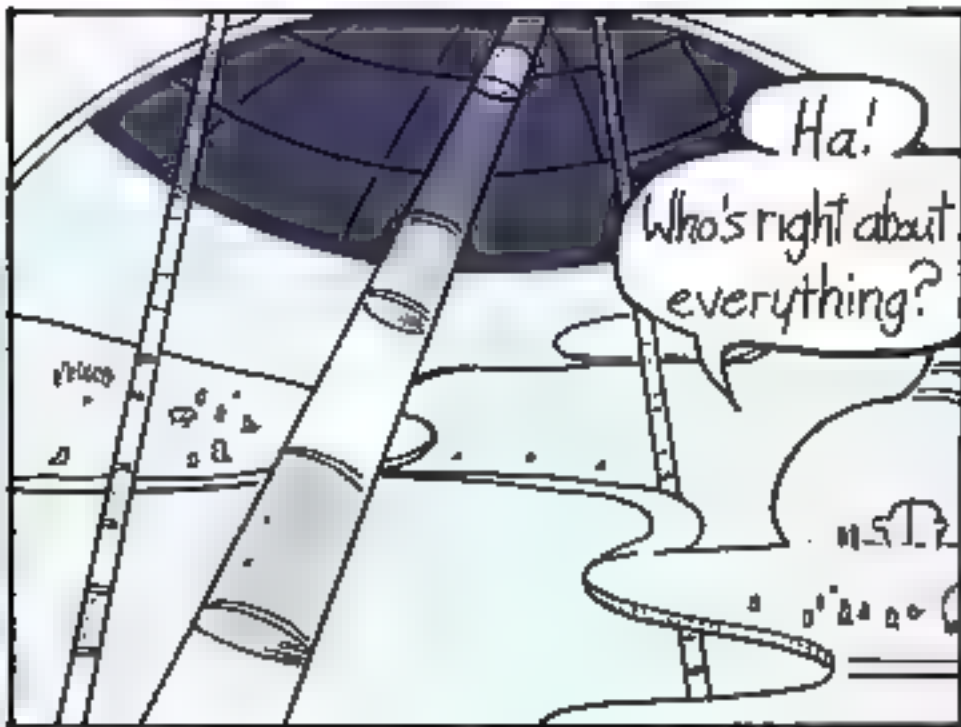
1. I'm sorry
to the other side
of the
line

I know you have high expectations, but try to be realistic.

SHWOOP

boing

boing



Even the panda fights?

Especially the panda fights.



Welcome
to the
Mothership.

Fox guy!
How'd you
get here?



I boarded
early. Let
me show you
to your
quarters.

I call
top
bunk!



This is an interstellar
voyage, not a slumber
party. They don't
have bunk beds.



Right. About.
Everything.



Fine,
bottom
bunk.



I'm surprised you're here, Reynard. I thought you did well on Earth.

Oh?

You mean when I was created on a whim by techbros who treated me as a pet and then forgot about me?

Or when I became materially rich but so isolated I fell for H.T.'s cult of personality?

Yeah. That seemed like a sweet deal.

My turtle friend wanted to go.

friendship!

You still have doubts.

Don't you?



Sure. I've been here long enough to see the flaws. Such as?



For one thing, the immigration paperwork is **really** complicated.



And there's the space madness, of which you seem to be aware.

Show me the space bureaucracy!



Ah, Sweetheart, I was hoping to talk.

Pavane, have you thought this out?



5/10/02

You let H.T. in. And parts of the Biomass. And some of the hungrier zombies.



We're not all cute dogs with fun girlfriends, you know.



Aren't you both bioweapons? And there are known litterers on board.



Be chill. I truly believe you can all find peace away from Earth.



Get over those mundane conflicts and groove to the cosmic funk.



Humans played their part. Time to move on, remembering what they left you.



Hair tips, mostly.



And look at your glowing coat!





You weren't
meant to see
that. I don't
know how the
screen went on...

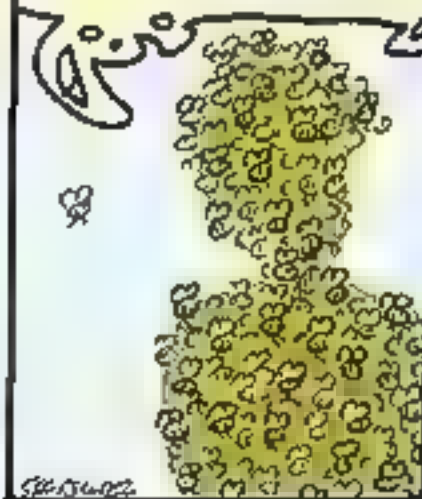
Did you
deliberately
throw
Tip off?

Humans don't
belong here.
They're limited
by evolution.

Trust me, he'll
be happier back
on Earth.

Or
violently
slammed
into it?

Last time that
happened to
me, I lost my
favorite butt.



I told you, stop worrying about Earth. You're better than that.



The two peoples of Lovetron are created species, like you. Like yours, our creators feared our potential.



We won our war. I'm sure this is a lot to take in...



Yeah.

Someone made whatever Tigerlily is? On purpose?



Omigosh they sound rad as heck.

I'm liking this
less and less.
Poor
Tip...
Yeah,
let's bail.



gustav

Just like
that? You're
the one who
wanted to
come!



I got
top bunk
and tried
the tacos.
I'm good.

Unity, I can't tell
if you're really, really
simple or really,
really wise.



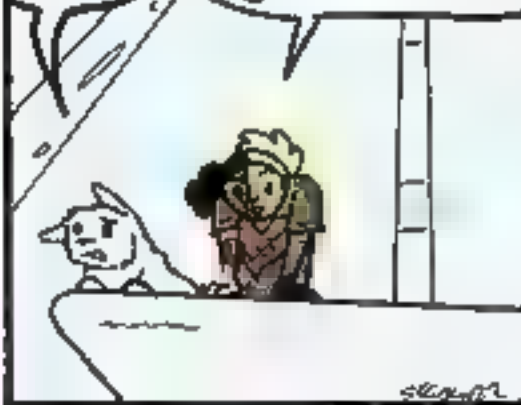
Or maybe
you're
just my
perfect
partner.



You're **my**
perfect
partner cuz
you found
the tacos.

It's too late to turn back.

Nah. I'll just smash stuff till the problem gets fixed.

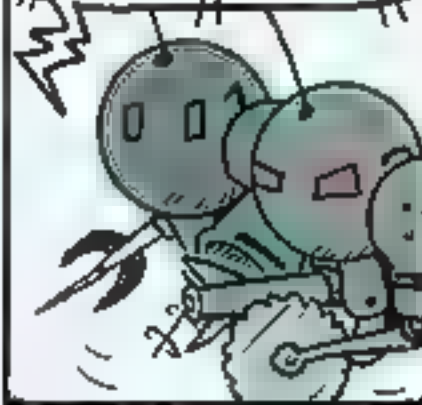


Not on a spaceship, you don't!

Agreed.



One does not simply destroy what must be carefully destroyed.



Oh good. We've got a brain trust.

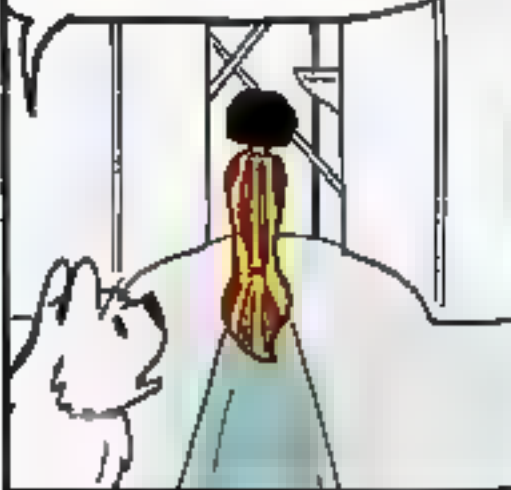


Destroy?

Destroy



Tigerlily? I mean...
Princess Tigerlily?
Can we talk?



Not to badmouth your
homeworld, but we
have some
concerns--



Pavane
bites!

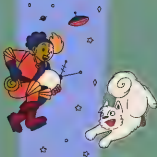
Would it be okay
if we, er, had
second
thoughts?



Okay?
No.

It'd be
funky.





What did you say?

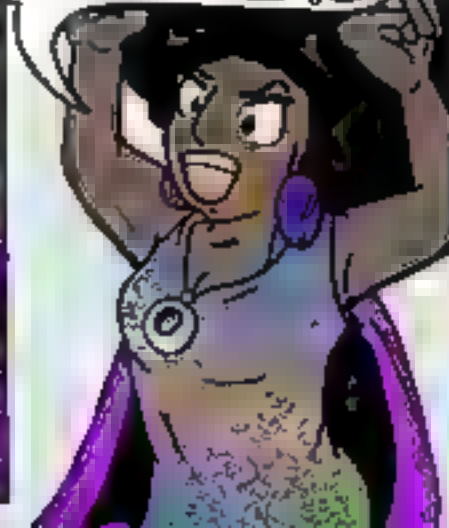
Sorry, was I too subtle?



Then allow me to shed my royal garb and radiate all the funk these sequins can absorb!



Time to re-spin the uncult groove! ~~Th~~rowdown!



...No, I don't think you've ever been too subtle.

Hold it, I'll get the strobe effects going...



The enlightened princess
thing was a put-on?

Course it was. Acting
square cut me deep.



I knew Miss
Priss wouldn't
let me on
her ship
otherwise.

Why
are
you
here?



Why else? **Crimes.**
And I can use
accomplices.



I'll follow
you to the
end of the
universe, hot
crazy-again
lady.

Shouldn't
take that
long, but
good vibe.



Mr. Green, the Anasigma board of directors is requesting your resignation.

Excuse me?

You used this company to wage a genocidal campaign.

Saving your skins!

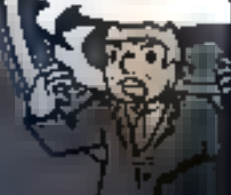
This was a war for humanity itself. You never objected to my methods before.

-excuse us, a genocidal campaign which **lost** money.

They weren't supposed to blow up **all** the drones!

Anasigma
is no longer
your concern.
We have a
new CEO.

That was
a bureau-
cratic
error!



Anyway, the man in
question is dead.

We've located
him alive.



We've sent a
What? lawyer to
summon him
and explain his
rights.



Aw, chill. I'll let you
out for air once they
deposit my retainer.



Stop. Name and purpose?

Mell Kelly, junior partner in Winter, Threadham, and Kelly.



You guys hired me to fetch your CEO. Just one of many law-adjacent services for our corporate clients.



Lemme in before I stress-test your security readiness, another service we provide but it is **way** expensive.



Ugh, upper management.

Thanks. I invoiced for the sack.



Here you go, A-Sig board. One CEO.



What the
frell is
going on?



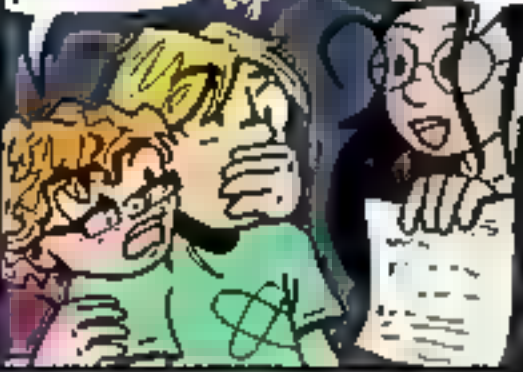
Chris Sanders,
you're legally the
head of
Anasigma.

What?
I'm
not --



-disputing
anything. Go
on about the
wealth and
power.

For your
first
executive
act, my
bill.



aw yeah it's

READER MAILBAG TIME

From our
Patreon!



Today Jacob Haller asks,
"Shaenon, what's a memorable
drawing challenge Jeff has
thrown at you?"



The Renaissance castle made
of office supplies was a
classic, but actually it's any
vehicles other than boats
and tiltrotor aircraft.



I honestly feel bad every
time I set things in a
big enclosed space that's
not a cave.



Also, looking back, I
apologize for all the times I
included a bit line for a
stranger, forgetting they'd need
a new character
design.



And **I** apologize for all the
times I knocked off a
generic design for what
turned out to be a
recurring character.



Sorry,
Dr. Engellbright
and Echo Bravo.



Oh! And it was my idea to
make a character a swarm
of bees, but it was Jeff's
idea to add **another** bee
swarm and have them
talk.



You think
that's hard;
try coloring
them.



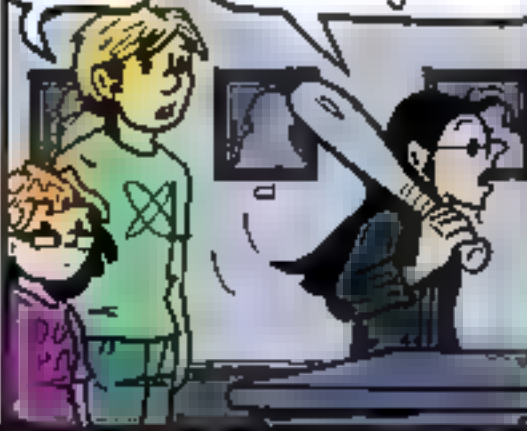
Maybe we **should** do
two lions on a couch
playing video games.

We have
to start
over!



Um... what do I do now?

Don't care. I just nabbed you to get access to A-Sig HQ.



Wh —

Time for information retrieval, boys! Who's first?



I'm not cut out for big business.

Don't say that until we check out your office.





Chris wants all
paramilitary
operations
suspended.

Yes,
Mr.
Sanders.

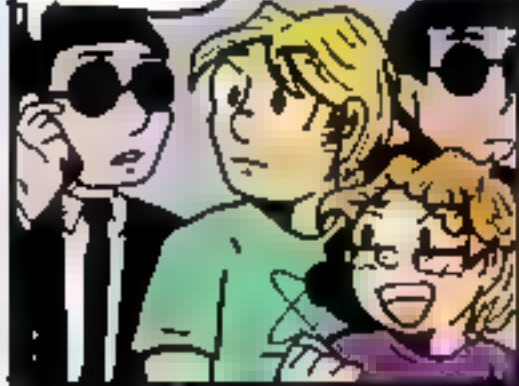
And he wants a
luxury chopper
trip
home.

Yes, Mr.
Sanders.

And he wants...
um...an NSYNC
reunion tour?

Timberlake
on the
horn, Mr.
Sanders.

You're
killing
it, Chris.





It's only a matter of time before Chris is ousted from A-Sig.



Yeah, somebody's gotta catch on.

But till then, we'll incompetence destroy it from within!



Our incompetence and graft will be legendary!

I'm gonna hold meetings on the moon!



I'm gonna get some of those cool sunglasses!

Think bigger, Chris.

I just want the sunglasses.



As long as you feed my dinosaur.

You sure you want us to drop you off here?

Yes. I need some alone time.



Somehow, this felt like the right place to come and reflect.



So much happened here... some good, some bad...



I mean it's been an empty lot since we turned the building into a robot.

...most just silly.



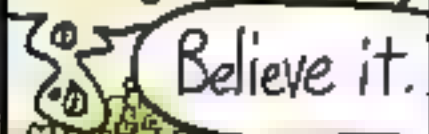


What it **is**, Pavane.
Welcome to our
mutiny.



Princess
Tigerlily!

You're the one who's
been sabotaging
the equipment?



Believe it.

Only my genius
could take your alien
tech apart and
make it better!



The jump
drive's full
of springs.



You're
welcome.

You turned these children against me.

No way!
You hurt Tip!



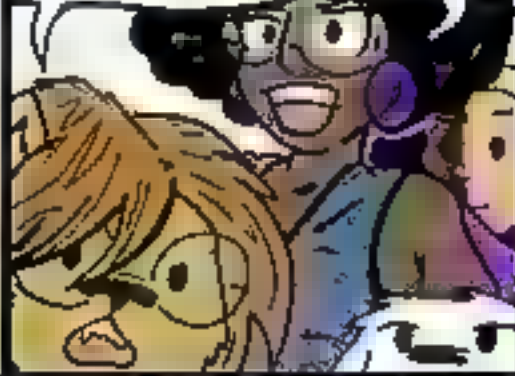
We want answers,
and you keep
hiding behind
that mysterious
act.



So we're ripping
the curtain away
and turning it into
our space pirate
flag!



Also, I'd
appreciate
accommodation
for my asthma.



Under
piracy,
inhalers
for all!

If I've withheld things, it was for your own good.

The Man's favorite thing to say.

You're confused. Wait until we reach Lovetron.

Or, alternate plan.

We take the ship, and **if** we go to Lovetron, ~~we~~ decide if it meets our standards.

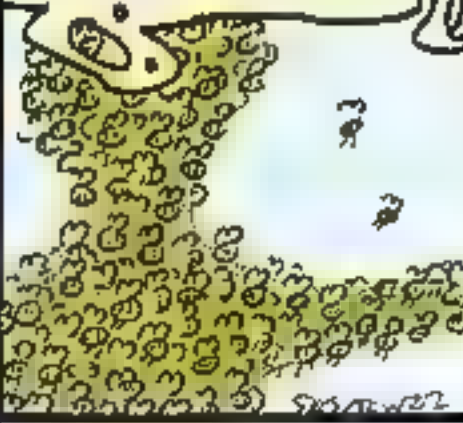
I vote for that plan if we get to call rest stops.

All the way, undead sister.

Believe me, Lovetron
is a sight better than
the half-ruined planet
I saved you from.



Your human friends
wouldn't return your
concern! They don't
want you back!



If that's true,
we'll just have
to be better
than them.



Aw, I
hate
being
better.



Sorry.
Sometimes it
has to happen.



You can't
just seize
the ship!

I don't
know,
can't we?



We haven't seen
other Lovetronians
on board. It's
just you, isn't it?



You're a hive mind.
One swarm can
run the ship.



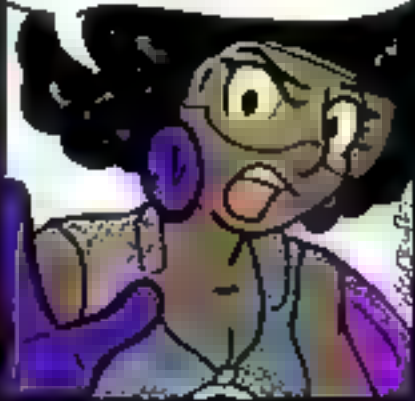
That's right. One
large, angry swarm
of bees.



Don't kowtow to threats! Know your strength!



Every cat who's metal or can eat bees, up front! Form a shield!



Right on! Hey! You're not metal and you don't eat bees!



Don't presume to know my life.



Gotcha. Just leave some bees for me.



Skin ♦ Horse

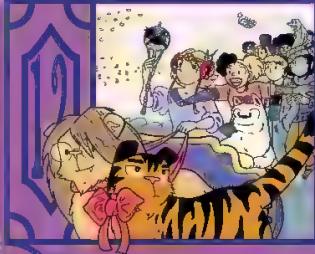
◦ Volume ♦ Eleven ◦



By Shaenon K. Garrity
& Jeffrey C. Wells

Skin ♦ Horse

Volume ♦ Twelve



By Shaenon K. Garrity
& Jeffrey C. Wells

Star light, star bright...
First star I see
tonight...



HITTY
SMASH!

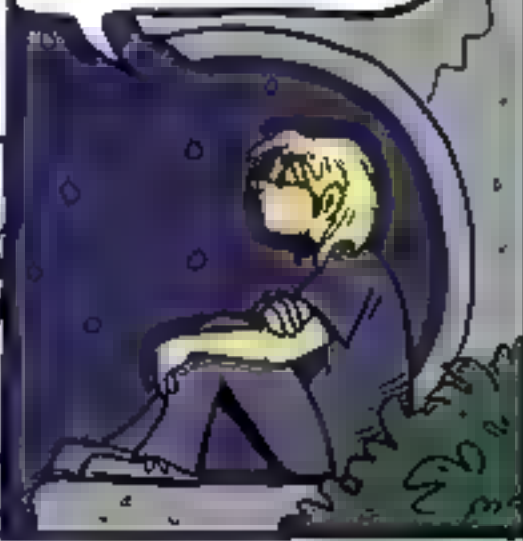
Not through
the wall!

AAAA

covered in bees
covered in bees



Have the wish
I wish tonight.



Staple
the
grille
on.

Resorting to
thuggery.
For shame.



You're too much
like your creators.
after all.

I **told**
you.



Think about who you
let on board, I said.
Don't trust every
nonhuman, I said.



And I
trusted
you.

Rookie
mistake.



Fear not, Miss. Your stay with me will, we hope, be only Temporary.

Oh joy.

I only wanted the best for you people. Why did you turn on me?

Ah, Miss! How often your dear Mother said the same about you.

This is cruel and unusual punishment.

Let us speak further over tea.

You pulled
off a coup.
Didn't think
you had it in
you.

I'm not
letting
you out,
H.T.



No, really, I'm
impressed.

If that's flattery,
it won't work.



Enough games,
okay? I think
it's time for all
of us to grow up.



Which
means
brunch! Yes
please!



You've
already
had two
breakfasts!



Pavane, we've talked it over, and we'll let you out if we can cooperate.



That means we're all adults here. We make decisions together.



But you know nothing!

I'm taking you to a better world, and you'll want to stop at Grivnis for popsicles!



There are popsicles?



It begins...



Excuse me,
may I blow
your mind?



Tigerlily! What
happened?

Revolution!



Folks grooved so
hard on fighting the
power on Earth,
they went on doing
it in outer
space!



What
she said,
but more
sensible

You're the
yang to my
yin, Atomic
Dog.



We've decided we're coming back to Earth.

Just not yet.

Oh?

We want to learn how to live together, and we want to do it right. No more shadow stuff.

We need to learn, prepare...

And get us some awesome space rayguns!

And get **defensive shields.** For **defense.**

You see how we got some details to work out.

So what are you doing here?

Stopping to pick you up.



Me?

Tigerlily insisted. You should talk to her.



I think she's having an emotion and she's not sure how to cope.



People having emotions is my favorite thing!

She keeps building robots and naming 'em after white breads.



Leaving you didn't
sit right with
me, cracker
barrel.



You said you'd
ditch squareness
to be with me.
That offer still
stand, saltine?



Yes.
On one
condition.



You're
setting
conditions
now?



Can you
call me
by my
name?



I keep
forgetting
you have a
couple of those.



Tell me... does my daughter want to see me?

Gavotte!

Sorry. She's not in a great mood.

I see. Poor Pavane.

Could you do me one favor? Look after her for me.

She's bees, Gavotte. We can't do much.

I made her caramels for the trip.

There's still so much to do here.

I know, we helped a lot, but we screwed up a lot too.



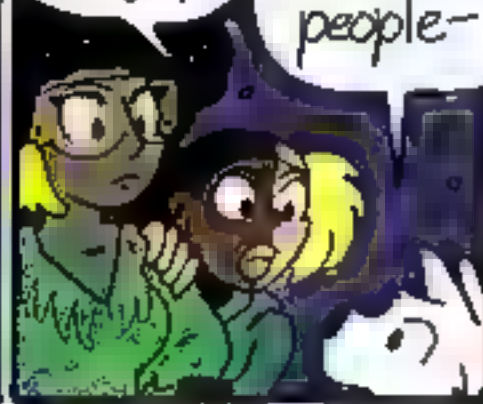
Because you were under the Man's thumb!



Or

because we need to stop and-

Because you didn't let me eat bad guys!



-consider what will truly help people-

You know I'm going to say "make-overs."



We'll solve world peace if I have to bite all of you.

You, uh,
wanna
pack
first?

... No.
No, I'm
ready.

Leaving a
wardrobe
behind?
This **is**
serious.

I'll
assemble
a new
one.

So this
is it,
Tigerlily.

You bet
it is,
Tip Wilkin.





Spring-Cleaning
Time.



Grillo Parlante 's at
the event we've been
waiting five years
for.



That's right —
we're bringing you
exclusive footage
of **THE RETURN!**



Maybe move so people
can exclusively see
the giant



We're at the scene as the Annex One mecha returns to its original site.



As a mobile center for nonhuman outreach, A-One has become a symbol of unity...



Aaand it just stepped on Jonah's car.



You should leave a nice note.



En, I did him a favor.



Not your
smootnest
touchdown,
Nick.

So I'm
nervous.
Sue me



So am I. I hope
Tigerlily approves
of my alterations
to her
robot.

Geddout.

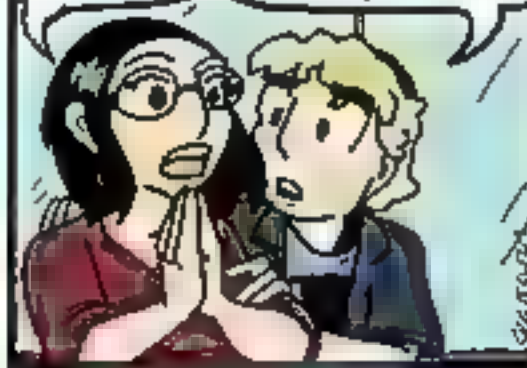


You replaced the
nukes with spring
power. She's
gonna plotz.



But I
never
reinstalled
the disco
ball!

You wanna
lie down and
chill with
some nice
math, babe?



What are you nervous about?

What do you think?



The people we're gonna see, we don't know how they'll react to anything on Earth.



Omigosh Dr. Lee got knocked up this is **amazing**



You'll love it.

Yeah, but I'll hafta pretend not to.

Can you call it "Nera Jr."?



You're about to have your first kid and you didn't tell us?

We ain't about to have our first kid.



What do you m—

DADDY!!



You **definitely** should've told us.

Names?

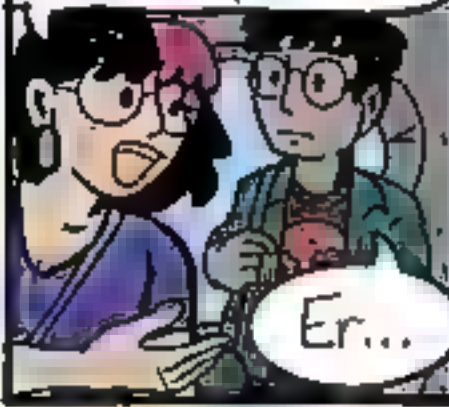
Your Mom,
Your Mom,
and Future
Your Mom.







What brings you here, Mr. Sage-Marron? Ignore the camera in your face.



Annex One sent an invitation to a small gathering for me and one guest.



So I brought a 500-acre swamp.



The first party foul! You saw it here!



Is it a potluck? We made hummingbird cake



When we learned the Mothership was returning, the Annex One co-op debated what to do.



We decided we needed the ship friends to help assess the situation.

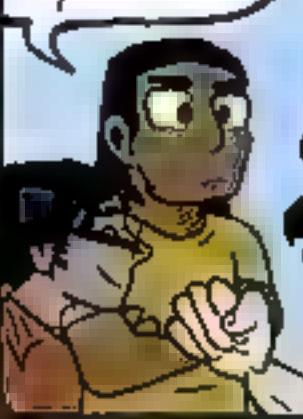


How'd the ship contact you?

In dreams, via a phantasmagoria of cosmic revelations.



Followed by advice that I update my hair.



Tip's still on board!



Corporate overlords are here!

Marcie! Chris! Not too busy with work?



To miss **this?**

We cleared the last AG-I prisoners out of extirpation.



Now we're on track to sunset the old board into elite VR retirement shelving.



So... extirpation.

I know, but they begged to get in after we called it "elite."



I didn't think the gang wanted cameras.

Dr. Lee said the world will learn soon enough.

Yes. Info is already leaking, and we'd rather people get the facts from journalists.

As opposed to....?

A Whimsycorp sponsorship of Second Contact would accrue first-quarter profits of-

How did you find us?



This feels like a family reunion.

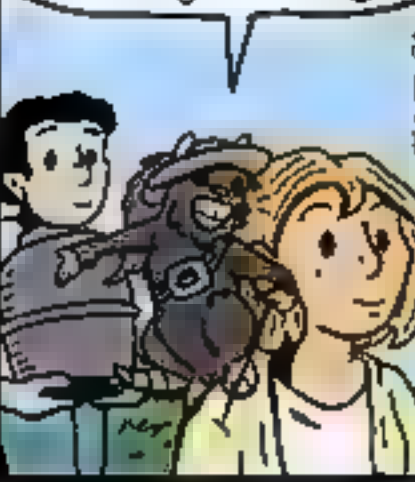
Except with no shrimp rolls.



Everything else, though. Kids running around, adults catching up...



Huzzah! My boon life partners and I bring a **keg!**

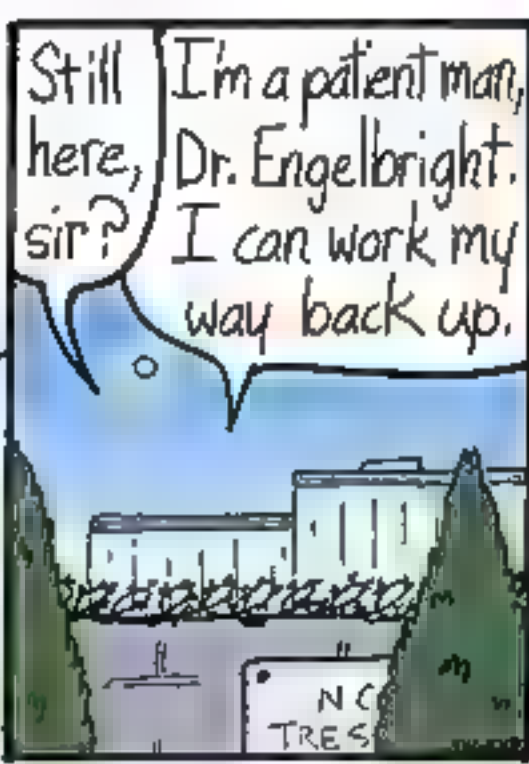
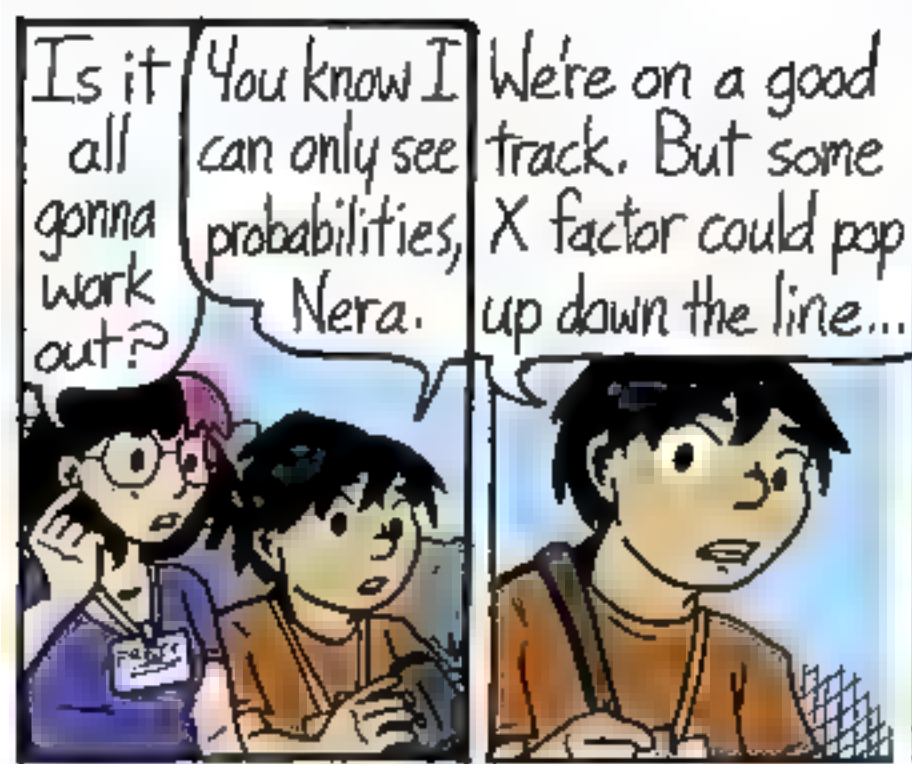


...the weird cousins you don't think were invited...



The beer's made from trash. Hope that's okay.





it's the
very last

MAILBAG

Two questions
this week!



Jacob Haller writes,
"Which of the Skin Horse
characters would you
most like to hang out
with in real life?"



Renard is the easy answer
because he's based on an
IRL friend. Leo would be
fine, I could talk "My
Little Pony" with Marcie...



What am I
talking about?!
Chatting with
anyone is
fatally awkward!

Don't fear
them, Jeff!
You created
them! You're
the god!



I'd kind of like to meet
any of the characters, but
I worry it'd turn into a
"Breakfast of Champions"
situation where I scream
at them to return
my lost youth.



Or at least the 14 1/2
years they took from me.

Anyway!
Next question!



Jeffrey Wikstrom writes,
"Were there early choices
you later regretted, or
spur-of-the-moment
decisions that ended up
paying big dividends?"



I really wanted a storyline
where Sweetheart remained
at Skin Horse, tracking
down rogue agents Tip
and Unity.



But Sweetheart
developed too
quickly. Oh, and
I was going to
kill Hitty off.

She was
too cool
after I
made her
a girl.



Letting Bubbles
"own" the
Violet droid
paid off
big time.

You always
worried about
her. You wrote
sad water
cooler stories.



As for me, I wanted
Tip and Mr. Green to kiss,
but we never got them
together when the time
was right.



There's so much we didn't
get to do. We should
start a
new str

NO! BOO!
Mailbag over!



We both need
vacations!
I won't hear
otherwise!

Sorry,
folks.
I tried.



I hoped
someone from
St. Charlie
would show up.

Oh yeah,
on the
flying
ship!

They've been extra
secretive since
they reversed the
mad-genius cure.

We could
learn what
they've been
plotting...

And get
footage
of the
ship!

Where's your
journalistic integrity?

The algorithm
prefers flying ships.



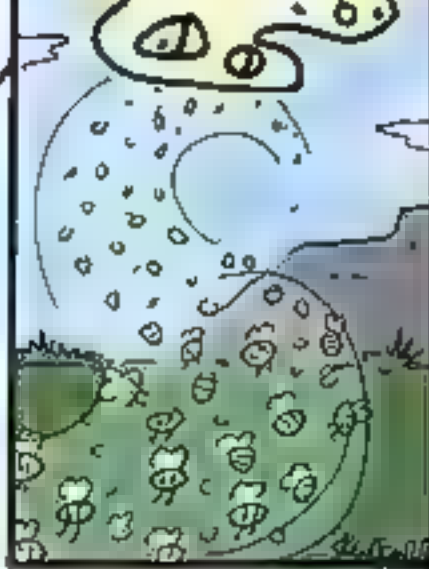
We **could** use
an exclusive.
A really big
get.

We hit
most
of our
list.

The Annex One
crew, the Cypress...
who's bigger
than that?



Why, hello,
media.



Like,
a food
influencer.

I passed
up a
clover field
for this.



So many stories we haven't gotten.

Yeah, like what was up with my mom?



We can't go until we've reported it all!



Those can be other stories for other times.



You see many possibilities, Jonah. For now, be in this one.

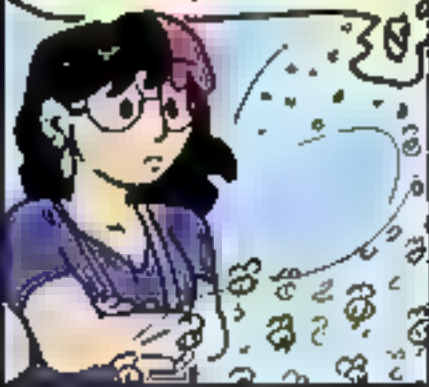


Yeah, the one where you have a super hot girlfriend.



There must be more!

I hope Pavane
and I can mend
things. We made
so many mistakes.



Don't blame
yourself.
You got us
this far.



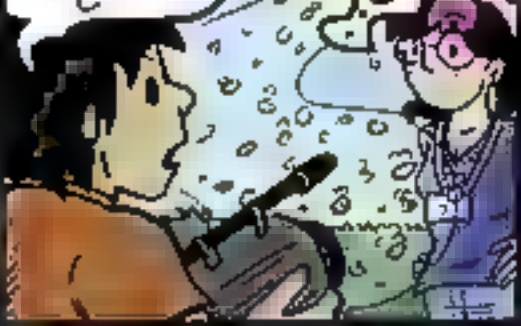
No. My
daughter
and I
were both
wrong.



Perhaps we should
have left humans
and nonhumans
to work things out
on their own.



If it helps, every reality
like that ends in nuclear
war or
"Emoji Movie"
sequels.



It does,
thank you.

What about AG-I?
And the Machine
Union? And the —

Too
late!

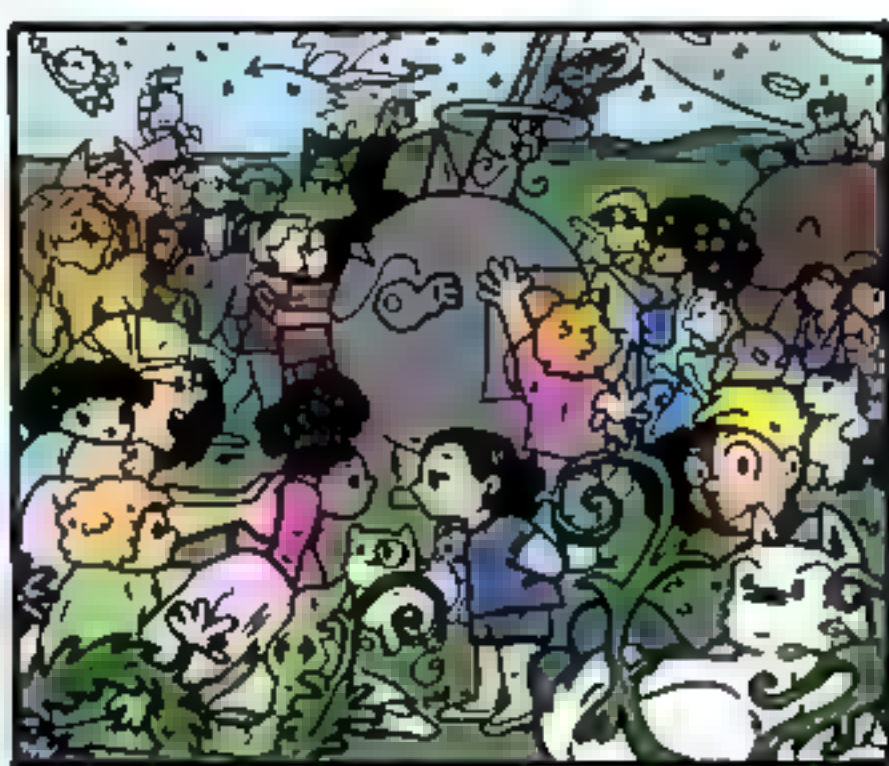


Hey,
everybody.



Ready to
get to work?





There is time enough to be real.
And if it never happens, that
can be all right, too.

Richard Kennedy
Amy's Eyes



Don Gould, M. Suzanne E. Gault, & James C. Noland
www.don-gould.com



there's a party in my toolbox
and science is invited



*Thin Beatz by Thomas K. Gentry & Jeffrey G. Bell.
www.thin-beatz.com, baby.*



ZOMBIES FOR
STRENGTH